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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000576

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR  
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2017

TAGS: PREL KWBG PBTS KHUM KPAL IS

SUBJECT: SETTLERS SEEK TO RETURN TO HOMESH

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) According to local press, all of the roughly 300 settler activists who remained at the former settlement of Homesh following a March 26 march to the site had been evacuated by the IDF by mid-morning March 28. Dozens of settler activists burned tires and damaged IDF vehicles March 27 in an effort to resist evacuation from Homesh, which was evacuated during the August 2005 disengagement from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank. Thousands of settlers supporting its re-establishment marched to Homesh March 26, and some 250-300 remained for two nights. Yisrael Medad, a resident of the settlement in Shilo, told poloff March 28 that efforts to continue occupying the site are continuing, with renewed calls for activists to continue coming to Homesh. Dror Etkes, settlement watch officer for the Israeli NGO Peace Now, told poloff March 27 that he doubts the settlers will be allowed to remain at Homesh, but that they succeeded in demonstrating "the unbelievable weakness of the Israeli government when it comes to settlements."

¶2. (C) Etkes opined that the primary purpose of the march was not to re-occupy the settlement, but rather to gain control of the debate on settlements. He said there is a generational rift between the older settlers who control the Yesha Council and the younger activists who grew up in settlement communities. He commented that the students occupying Homesh represent the next generation of settlement activists, who want to "kidnap headlines" and change the discussion from further disengagement to future settlement activity.

WALLES